

*Remarks of
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For the Education Committee
On Senate Bill 24, Section 29
(*Teacher Evaluation and Tenure*)

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My name is Jeanne Deming, and I'm a speech and language pathologist in Ridgefield. I can't be with you today because it is a teacher workday in my district; I am taking classes to continue my professional development in working with students with learning disabilities and behavioral challenges. I would like to comment on proposed changes to the teacher evaluation system and tenure. First I'd like to address the issue of teacher evaluation. I certainly think that changes are needed and would be welcomed by teachers and administrators alike. As I speak to teachers in my own district as well as other teachers across the state, I hear over and over again that teachers are not being evaluated on a regular basis. Good teachers want to be better teachers. We can't be when we are not afforded the professional courtesy of receiving feedback on the job we are doing. More teachers than you could imagine are even granted tenure without ever being evaluated! Those that are evaluated, are subjected to what we term "drive by" evaluations that are merely a rubber stamp on the methods we are practicing. We have heard that administrators are overburdened with the many tasks that take up their days. The plan proposed in the legislation serves to only make the evaluation process even more unwieldy. Changes should be made, of course, but these proposals need to be realistic and shouldn't be pushed through in a rush to establish an education agenda. Take time to consider the consequences of the highly complicated and lengthy evaluation procedures that have been proposed. Consider ways of refining and enforcing the teacher evaluation we already have! Talk to administrators and teachers and get their take- they have great ideas!

The teacher evaluation process is of course tied closely to teacher tenure. Teachers are open and receptive to the idea of changing some aspects of teacher tenure. Make the process more efficient. Decrease the length of time needed to dismiss an ineffective teacher. **Again, hold administrators accountable to their jobs to evaluate!** But to leave it up to one person, to give one individual the power to often arbitrarily assign ratings that ultimately determine a teacher's salary and job status, doesn't make any sense. In these lean times, and those to come, I can foresee a school district with a matrix set before them, saying to themselves, "OK, how many exemplary teachers can I afford this year? And how many developing teachers? Hmmmm...I can afford to renew this developing teacher because they're less expensive....or....if I bump this exemplary teacher down to a proficient rating we can save some money there..." Not to mention that the proposed

changes turn the mentoring that teachers do on its head- what teacher in their right mind would share their expertise, materials, and innovative lessons with a colleague if it can be the difference between being deemed a "proficient" teacher as opposed to an "exemplary" one? The potential for abuse of this system is obvious. Please consider these points carefully and take time to do this right. Teachers are all for changing the teacher evaluation and tenure system to make it better, and fairer for all. But please do your due diligence in researching and investigating realistic and ultimately, more effective approaches, rather than rushing the process just to get something on the table. Thank you for your attention and for your service to all citizens in the state of Connecticut.